

D4 WESTport

January 2007

Welcome to the January edition of **WESTport**, MoDOT District 4's newsletter to our Missouri General Assembly members, city and county officials, and other transportation partners from the west central region.

You will receive monthly updates of District 4 projects and activities throughout the regular General Assembly session, and periodic updates during the rest of the year. We hope you will find the information useful and enlightening.

Our District 4 staff is always available to answer your questions and address constituent concerns. See our list of contacts at the bottom of this newsletter for telephone numbers and other information, or visit our district website at www.modot.mo.gov/kansascity

Travel Times Added to Kansas City Scout System

Kansas City's only traffic management system, Kansas City Scout, will begin posting Travel Time messages on its electronic freeway signs to help drivers during their weekday rush-hour commutes. Beginning Tuesday, January 9, 2007, from 6-10 a.m. and from 3-7 p.m. drivers will see Travel Times to various freeway destinations on Scout's message boards.

Travel Times use Scout's extensive traffic sensor data to calculate how long it takes to drive from one area to another. Travel Times are intended to generally inform drivers of unusual delay during rush hour traffic. The Scout system is implementing Travel Times on a limited basis to acclimate drivers to the frequency and format of the messages. A complete explanation of this new enhancement is available from the Scout Web site at www.kcscout.net.

Kansas City Scout is a traffic management and information system that uses technology to offer area drivers a safer, faster and more manageable freeway commute. The Kansas and Missouri departments of transportation jointly operate and maintain the Scout system. It covers nearly 100 miles of portions of Interstates 435, 35, 70 and other freeway areas.

The states are planning to expand the system by approximately 70 miles by the end of 2008. Scout's operations center is located at MoDOT's district headquarters in Lee's Summit.

Enhanced Safety Makes Smooth Roads Projects Shine

With so much of the focus on making 2,200 miles of the state's busiest roads smooth -- and completing the work a full year earlier than promised -- an important aspect of the Smooth Roads Initiative could fade into the shadows.

But a second look shows how MoDOT's commitment to safety delivered extra value to the push for smoother driving. Just check out what happened in District 4 alone:

- 454 miles of clear zones
- 17,000 new signs, most that are larger, more visible and easier to read
- 490 miles of wider, brighter striping, both down the centerlines and along the sides of roads
- 490 miles of delineators

There's no doubt that the \$70 million in Amendment 3 money invested in District 4 made road surfaces smoother and safer for the vast majority of Kansas City-area motorists. Many of Kansas City's busiest routes, from I-470 in the southeast to I-29 to the north, are smoother. From ramps to mainlines, either diamond-grinding or asphalt overlays made the way smoother for motorists throughout District 4. Potholes are on the retreat, thanks to 50,475 square yards of pavement repair that largely preceded resurfacing operations.

You want to talk resurfacing? How about 1.1 million tons of asphalt spread about two inches thick over hundreds of miles of Kansas City-area state routes? Ultra-thin, bonded asphalt wearing surfaces covered 230,000 square yards, and District 4 diamond-grinding projects made 546,000 square yards of good pavement even smoother.

Extra Effort; All Around

The first Smooth Roads Initiative project in District 4 started in May 2005. The \$8.3 million milling and resurfacing project on Route 50 in Johnson County stretched from the Jackson County line to Route HH west of Warrensburg. The work included the SRI elements that would soon become familiar to both construction inspectors and drivers - fog-sealing shoulders, sign replacement, mile-marker changes, rumble strips along the shoulder and the new, wider 6-inch epoxy striping.

All of those Smooth Roads Initiative elements added to the workload of construction and materials inspectors, maintenance crews and designers. Maintenance workers jumped in early to make hundreds of pavement repairs in preparation for resurfacing contracts.

"Maintenance crews under Superintendents Todd Gibson, Pat Calhoun and Tony Bryant particularly found themselves a lot more involved in SRI than they expected," said Assistant District Engineer Chris Redline. "All maintenance crews were performing concrete joint replacement prior to contractors' resurfacing work. Those crews took on an enormous challenge and knocked it down quickly."

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Maintenance Superintendent Pat Moseley's crew handled some joint replacement work in January 2005. "It surprised me how much we were able to get done, especially given the winter temperatures," he said.

Helping Hands

And before maintenance or construction crews could begin their labors, the design department had to complete their work on nearly 50 projects. Much of that effort took place from December 2004 through August 2005.

"Then in December 2005, they came to us with a package of six more projects," said Design Engineer Scott Humphrey. District 1 designers stepped in to help, relieving some of the pressure on the department's workflow and establishing a relationship that continues today.

Oh, and did anyone ask the sign crews whether they might have a spare moment to take care of a non-SRI job? They were busy placing or replacing 162,412 square feet of aluminum – that's about 3.7 acres of new signage in the Kansas City district. Extra help, in the form of assistance from crews from Districts 1, 2 and 5, kept them on schedule.

"Everyone in District 4 proved once again that we are eager to meet a challenge," said District Engineer Beth Wright. "Nearly two years of long days and demanding schedules paid off in safer transportation for millions of motorists. MoDOT team members have good reason to be proud of this extraordinary accomplishment."

Program Promotes Older Driver Safety/Community Mobility

Dozens of state and community-based leaders are kicking off a year-long initiative to increase awareness and action focused on promoting older driver safety in Missouri.

MoDOT, in partnership with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the San Francisco-based American Society on Aging, assembled key leaders from across the state concerned with improving older driver safety and encouraging them to use transportation alternatives when they must limit or stop driving. The group's action will focus primarily on instituting five core programs in five cities in Missouri - Cape Girardeau, Columbia, Kansas City, Springfield and St. Louis.

Older drivers were involved in 16 percent of the fatal traffic crashes and 13 percent of the crashes involving a serious injury in the last three years.

"Mature drivers, their families and their physicians need to understand that growing older doesn't always mean giving up driving, but it may mean making some changes in how and when you drive," said Jackie Rogers MoDOT's state coordinator for the project.

As part of the campaign, MoDOT will work with NHTSA, ASA and community coordinators in each of the five cities to stage trainings and outreach efforts on the programs. A description of the five programs can be found on the MoDOT web site at www.modot.org/safety.

Lawmaker Files Bill To Change State's Safety Belt Law

State Rep. Neal St. Onge, chairman of the House Transportation Committee, has filed legislation to change the state's safety belt law to allow primary enforcement.

The house bill number - 90 - signifies the number of lives that could be saved each year in Missouri with a primary safety belt law. Current law allows only secondary enforcement, meaning motorists can be stopped only if the driver is first pulled over for another offense. Federal statistics show that primary enforcement would also prevent more than 1,000 serious injuries each year and save Missourians about \$231 million a year in costs associated with traffic crashes.

The Primary Safety Belt Partners, a task force formed under the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety, and the Missouri Department of Transportation have said they would make primary safety belt legislation their top priority in the 2007 legislative session.

MoDOT Director Pete Rahn said passing this measure would increase safety belt use an estimated 11 percent. The state's safety belt use rate dropped two points in 2006 to 75 percent, down from 77 percent in 2005. The national average for safety belt use is 81 percent.

More information about Missouri's safety belt law can be found at <http://www.savemolives.com/>

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